

REMARKS

Claims 1-41 were originally filed in the present application. Of the pending claims, a restriction was required under 35 U.S.C. 121 by the examiner to one of either Claims 1-23 (Group I) and Claims 24-41 (Group II). Applicants affirm the provisional election of the claims of Group I for prosecution in this application. Claims 24-41 have been withdrawn from prosecution in this application.

With respect to the Office Action, Claims 1, 6, 11-13, 19, 22 and 23 were initially rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,363,283 to Weber. Claims 1-7, 11-15 and 22-23 were initially rejected under 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,914,102 to Brown. Claims 1, 4, 6 and 20-23 were initially rejected under 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,391,768 to Arends et al. Claims 1, 4, 6-7, 14-16 and 22-23 have also been initially rejected under 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,093,010 to Lamson. Finally, Claims 1-4, 6-7, 11, 14-15 and 22-23 stand initially rejected under 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,164,949 to Lamson.

Additionally, Claim 17 stands initially rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the '102 patent (Brown) or the '010 patent (Lamson) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,135,756 to Lamson. Claim 18 has been initially rejected under 103(a) as unpatentable over the '102 patent (Brown) or the '010 patent (Lamson) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,118,277 to Padovani.

The examiner has indicated that Claims 8-10 would be considered allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As filed, Claim 8 depended from Claim 7, while Claims 9 and 10 depended from Claim 8.

Accordingly, Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of Claims 7 and 8, Claims 7, 8 and 14—the limitations of which were similar to that of Claim 7—have been cancelled, and the dependency of Claims 9 and 10 have been amended to depend from Claim 1. Claim 15 has been amended to address an antecedent issue which arose in light of the amendment to Claim 1. Claims 24-41 have been withdrawn and are not at issue in this application. The amendment to Claim 1 has been made only for the purpose of taking advantage of the claim coverage currently being offered

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by the present PTO Action. Applicant respectfully disagrees with the examiner's rejections to the original claims, but has chosen to pursue broader coverage in a continuing application while allowing the present application to proceed to an allowance.

Reconsideration of all pending claims is respectfully requested in light of the above amendments.

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CONCLUSION

Claims 1-6, 9-13, and 15-23 are presently pending in the referenced application. Claims 1, 9, 10 and 15 have been amended, while Claims 7, 8 and 14 have been cancelled. Applicant believes that all pending claims are allowable, and a notice to that effect is earnestly sought at the examiner's earliest convenience. Reconsideration of all pending claims is hereby requested. If any informalities remain which may be cleared up by Examiner Amendment, Applicant requests the Examiner to call the undersigned attorney at his convenience.

The Commissioner is authorized to debit or credit our Deposit Account No. 23-0280 for any payment **deficiencies or overpayments** associated with this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

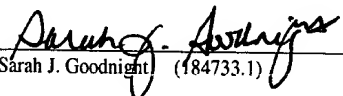
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